

A Lesson My Father Taught Me

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam



About the Author-

Abul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, known as A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is a renowned Indian scientist of international fame. He served as the eleventh President of India from 2002 to 2007 and was affectionately referred as the people's President. He was born on 15th October, 1931 in Rameswaram. As an Aerospace engineer he worked with Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). He became famous as the Missile Man of India for his work on the development of ballistic missile and launch vehicle technology. His key role in India's Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998 needs a special mention. Government of India awarded him with the prestigious awards such as Padma Bhushan (1981), Padma Vibhushan (1990) and India's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna (1997). He has written several books. India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium (1998), Wings of Fire: An Autobiography (1999), Mission India (2005), My Journey: Transforming Dreams into Actions (2013) are some of his famous books.

Vaishali Mali

About the Essay-

In this short essay, Kalam talks about his childhood and how his parents, especially his father influenced him. He narrates an incident about his someone leaves a gift for his father after he had been elected the president of the panchayat board. Kalam was then a small child and absent- mindedly accepted the gift that was meant for his father, who was away for his evening prayers. His father was very angry upon seeing the gift and slapped Kalam. Later ,his father explained the matter to him and told him not to accept any gifts without his father's permission.

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What did I learn from my father?

It's this-work with integrity and succeed with integrity It is indeed a great experience for me to remember my parents: my father who lived 103 years and my mother 93 years. For both of them, I was their last child — a dear, lovable child, among my four brothers and a sister. Ours was a full-fledged joint family — and even now continues to uphold that tradition.

When Prabhu Chawlaji asked me if I could write about an important event in my life which may touch some hearts because of its poignancy or happiness quotient, what popped up in my mind was the present dynamics of the nation and the concerns of millions of our citizens. This question led me to share the love I have seen from parents, most of the time — and simultaneously, I was compelled to learn with parental concern.

Let me share that event that happened in my life more than seven decades ago.

My father , Janab Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen, taught me a great lesson when I was a young boy. It was just after India got independence. At that time, panchayat elections took place at my native Rameswaram in coastal Tamil Nadu. My father was elected its board member. The same day, he was also made the president of the civic body.

Rameswaram was then a beautiful place with a population of around 30,000 people. If my father was elected president of the panchayat board, it was not because he hailed from a particular community or spoke a particular language or belonged to a particular economic strand. He was elected only on the basis of his nobility of mind and for being a good human being.

I would like to narrate one incident that took place on the day he was elected president of the panchayat board.

I was at that time studying in school. Those days we did not have electricity. We used to study under lamps that were lit on rationed kerosene. I used to read the lessons loudly. One night, I heard a knock at the door. Those days, none in Rameswaram never used to lock the door. Somebody opened the door, came in and asked me where my father was. I told him that he had gone for evening namaz (prayer). At this, he said, “I have brought something for him. Can I keep it here?” I shouted for my mother to get her permission to receive the item. But she was also on the namaz, and gave me no response. I finally asked the person to leave the item on the cot. After that I continued with my studies. Which meant, I resumed reading aloud from my study books, fully concentrating on my studies.

Soon, my father came in. He saw a tambalum (plate) kept on the cot. “What is this?” he asked me. “Who has given this?” I told him that somebody came and had left it for him. He opened the cover of the tambalum and found there was a costly dhoti

(angavastram), besides some fruits and sweets. There was also a slip that the person had left behind. The sight, overall, upset my father. For the first time in my life, I saw him very angry. It also turned out to be the first time I got a thorough beating from him. I got frightened and started weeping. My mother came in, embraced and consoled me. At this, my father came and touched my shoulder with affection and advised me not to receive any gift without his permission.

He quoted an Islamic Hadith, which states that, “When the Almighty appoints a person to a position, He takes care of his provision. If a person takes anything beyond that, it is an illegal gain.”

Summary - A Lesson “My Father Taught Me” is a thought provoking essay written by A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. In this short essay Kalam narrates an incident from his childhood in Rameswaram, when he was 10 years old. The incident took place on the day when his father was elected President of Rameswaram Panchayat board. At that time Kalam was a school boy. It was evening time and Kalam was studying under ration kerosene lamps, as there was no electricity. Kalam was reading the lessons loudly. Suddenly he heard a knock at the door. A stranger came and asked him about his father. Kalam told him that his father had gone for evening Namaz (prayer). The stranger told that he had brought something for his father. Kalam called his mother to ask her whether to accept it or not.

But as she was also on the Namaz, there was no response. Hence Kalam told the person to leave the thing on the cot and continued his studies. After coming home his father saw a tambalam kept on the cot and asked Kalam about it. Kalam told him about the stranger who dropped it. When he opened the cover of the tambalam, he found a costly dhoti, angawastram, few silver cups, some fruits, some sweets and the slip that the person had left behind. He became very angry and Kalam got a thorough beating from him for the first time. He started weeping. His mother tried to console him. Then his father told him not to receive any gift without his permission. He quoted an Islamic Hadith, which states that, —When the almighty appoints a person to a position, He takes care of his provision. If a person takes anything beyond that, it is an illegal gain.‖ Then he told him that it is not a good habit. According to Kalam gift is always accompanied by some purpose and it is a dangerous thing. Thus the incident taught Kalam a very important lesson.

Thank You